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**Retired Generals From Nebraska Call For \$10 Million Increase
In Quality Early Education As Critical to Nation's Long-Term Security**

*New report shows most young adults in Lincoln and statewide
lack the basic skills and qualifications to serve in the military*

LINCOLN, NE (March 4, 2013)— Three retired generals from Nebraska today called on state lawmakers to support an increase of \$10 million per year for the Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund as a necessary step to ensure that more young adults meet the basic qualifications for military service. They released a new report at the State Capitol showing that military service is now out of reach for most young adults in Lincoln and statewide.

The retired generals -- Mark R. Musick, Major General, US Air Force (Ret.), Randolph M. Scott, Brigadier General, US Air Force (Ret.) and Paul G. Cohen, Brigadier General, US Air Force (Ret.) -- were joined by State Senator John Harms, who proposed the \$10 million per year increase.

“High-quality early childhood education has gained bipartisan support in Nebraska because it is a solid investment in our future,” said General Musick. “We call on our state lawmakers to support Senator Harms’ legislation to help more of Nebraska’s children develop in mind, body, and character so they can succeed at whatever career path they choose, including military service.”

General Cohen cited Department of Defense estimates that 75 percent of young Americans are unable to serve in the military for three primary reasons: they are too poorly educated, they are physically unfit, or they have a criminal record. “Our military remains the strongest in the world, but I am very concerned about the reduced number of young men and women who can meet all of the qualifications required to serve in our Armed Forces,” said General Cohen.

According to data cited in the report, entitled *Lincoln Youth: Ready, Willing but Unable to Serve*, most young adults in Lincoln and statewide lack the basic skills and qualifications to serve in the military:

- In Lincoln, 27 percent of young people do not graduate from high school on time, as compared to 16 percent statewide.
- Even among high school graduates in Nebraska, almost 1 in 6 who try to join the military cannot do well enough on the military’s test of math and literacy skills to be able to serve.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s criteria, which are broader than the military’s, 44 percent of young adults in Nebraska are overweight or obese, up from 30 percent thirteen years ago.
- One in every 44 adults in Nebraska was in jail, in prison, on probation or on parole in 2007.

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The report highlights long-term studies of high-quality early education programs that show impressive education and crime prevention outcomes:

- The Perry Preschool Project in Michigan randomly assigned disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds to a high-quality pre-kindergarten program or to a control group with no intervention, and followed them over several decades. The children who participated in the project were 44 percent more likely to graduate from high school. By age 27, those who did not attend the Perry Preschool were five times more likely to have been chronic criminal offenders than the children who participated.
- A similar long-term study was conducted of Chicago's Child-Parent Centers pre-kindergarten programs, which have served over 100,000 at-risk children since 1967. Participants in the pre-K program were 29 percent more likely to have graduated from high school, and those who were left out of the program were 70 percent more likely than participants to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18.

Long-term studies also show that high-quality early education programs cut crime, welfare and other costs so much that they return to society as much as \$16 for every \$1 invested. There is even new evidence showing how early learning programs can help reduce America's rising rates of childhood obesity.

"Whether it is improving young people's education, keeping them on the right side of the law, or keeping them physically fit, early education has shown it can provide the foundation on which to build real success," said General Scott.

Fortunately, Lincoln is opening an Educare early childhood education program that has shown very promising results in Omaha. Researchers found that the program scored high on the quality of services the centers provide, and that the children were making meaningful progress. For example, the more time children spent in Educare, the higher their vocabulary scores.

Unfortunately, there is tremendous unmet need in Nebraska. In 2011, 63 percent of 4-year-olds in Nebraska were not being served by either state pre-kindergarten or Head Start.

"Senator Harms' legislation will offer early learning opportunities to an estimated additional 2,200 disadvantaged children each year," said General Musick. "Unless we take action and implement the most effective strategies to help our children succeed, our future national security could be at risk."

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